# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>AI is revolutionizing customer service at an unprecedented pace</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 01</td>
<td>Aim high or say goodbye: Customers’ expectations are higher than ever – and they won’t settle for less</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 02</td>
<td>Map out the best pathway to meet customer expectations using the right combination of AI and human support</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 03</td>
<td>The AI race is on: Almost half of customer support teams have already adopted AI, with more planning to invest in 2024</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 04</td>
<td>3 ways to save time and enhance efficiency with AI and automation</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 05</td>
<td>Real talk: AI is coming for support jobs – but not in the way you think</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 06</td>
<td>Future-proof and empower your support team by helping them grow into new roles</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 07</td>
<td>Ditch the dated tech: Old tools are holding support teams back, and they’re reevaluating their tech stacks for 2024</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 08</td>
<td>Get buy-in for new tools by addressing the common obstacles</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 09</td>
<td>Metrics reloaded: Success looks different in an AI-first world, and teams need to redefine the way they measure value</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trend 10</td>
<td>How fundamental customer service metrics are changing – and what to do about it</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>Customer service is undergoing radical change. Are you ready to embrace it?</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A I is revolutionizing customer service at an unprecedented pace

2023 was the year customer service changed forever.

The arrival of modern, generative AI is as significant as the birth of the internet. It’s set to disrupt all industries – and customer service has already been radically redefined. But are support teams ready to shift their mindset and seize this huge opportunity?

We’ve just scratched the surface of this major transformation, but things are moving at lightning speed. Just think of the difference between this year and last – 12 months ago, AI was only an emerging possibility, and our AI bot Fin merely a glint in our developers’ eyes. Now, it’s responded to over 2 million customer requests, and counting. We have a front-row seat to the AI revolution, and it’s clear now is the time to take action. Those who don’t risk getting left behind.

Every year, we survey thousands of customer service professionals to keep a pulse on how the landscape is shifting. For our fourth annual Customer Service Trends Report, we specifically wanted to understand the effects, challenges, and opportunities of this disruption on the customer service space.
We surveyed over 2,000 global support professionals from a range of locations, roles, and company sizes* to find out how customer service is changing across five main themes: customer expectations, AI trends, support teams, tech stacks, and metrics.

* Intercom commissioned an independent research firm to survey 2,004 customer support professionals about how customer support teams are preparing for ground-shaking changes and new capabilities. The margin of error for this study is 2.2% at the 95% confidence level.
**AI has already influenced customer expectations, and they’re higher than ever.** Now that customers know how AI can improve their service experience – making it faster and more efficient – they’re unwilling to wait around for anything less.

**AI adoption jumped in 2023 – and shows no sign of slowing.** Almost half of customer support teams are currently using AI, and the results speak for themselves. These teams have the advantage – but there’s still time for the other 55% of teams to catch up, if they work fast.

**AI is coming for support jobs, but only the monotonous, repetitive parts.** AI is changing the nature of support work and creating exciting new career opportunities for humans. But, there’s a perception gap between leaders and their teams when it comes to role evolution, which needs to be addressed in order to get support reps fully bought in.

**Support teams are being held back by tools that were built for the past, and they’re reevaluating their tech stacks.** Last-generation technology isn’t going to cut it in this new age of customer service, which is why 65% of C-level support execs are looking at new tools specifically as a result of AI.

**Success looks different in an AI-first world, and the ways of measuring it are changing.** Old metrics won’t help you meet new opportunities, so support teams need to rethink how they measure and report on core metrics and KPIs to get a true measure of value and success.
Throughout this report, we share our findings as well as practical advice to help you and your team turn these insights into action. No matter your role, you'll walk away with a deeper understanding of how AI is changing the game, what other leaders and teams are doing about it, and simple ways to get started (or level up).

As our research shows, the possibilities are incredible, and the support teams ready to embrace this innovation will come out on top.

My advice to support leaders who haven't already adopted AI would be to move fast. Don’t lose out on the opportunity – it’s there for the taking (for now).

Time to get moving.

–Declan Ivory, VP of Customer Support at Intercom

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Who you are</th>
<th>What you care about</th>
<th>What you’ll learn</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>C-level support executive</td>
<td>Creating bold, innovative customer service strategies that elevate your business.</td>
<td>Future-ready insights and trends to help you get – and stay – ahead of the competition and delight your customers (and your CEO).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support leader (VP or director)</td>
<td>Bringing the strategic vision to life using technology and processes to be as efficient and cost-effective as possible.</td>
<td>Actionable ways AI can help you to improve the quality of your customer service and reach operational excellence, with business-wide results.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manager or team lead</td>
<td>Delivering the best possible customer service experience within headcount and budget limitations – and without burning out your support reps.</td>
<td>The best ways to support and engage your customers and your team, using a winning combination of AI, technology, and workflow optimizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support agent</td>
<td>Impressing customers with fast, efficient support interactions while growing your career in an evolving landscape.</td>
<td>How AI can enhance your day-to-day, free up more time to focus on impactful tasks, and unlock new job opportunities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Aim high or say goodbye: Customers’ expectations are higher than ever – and they won’t settle for less
Expectations are higher than ever

A whopping 87% of support teams say customer service expectations have increased in the past year.

Our research has consistently shown that customer expectations are always on the rise. This year, over two-thirds (68%) of support teams say that customer expectations have been directly influenced by AI, particularly when it comes to key metrics like response times.
Customer expectations continue to rise, but support teams are now more confident they can meet them.

68% of support teams say customer expectations have been directly influenced by AI.

77% of support teams believe that AI will accelerate customers’ expectations of fast response times.

This means that AI is already reshaping how customers interact with companies – and there are business-wide implications for the teams that can (and can’t) meet these elevated expectations.

As every customer-centric team knows, meeting customer expectations isn’t just a nice-to-have. It’s crucial to staying competitive and keeping customers happy, meaning it has a direct impact on three major business Rs: reputation, retention, and revenue.
Retention is getting tougher – and higher customer expectations could be the cause

Our survey also revealed that customer retention is getting harder than ever. Over two-thirds of C-level support executives say it’s harder to retain customers now compared to a year ago, and almost half of support teams think that this is due to higher expectations of great customer service. After all, today’s consumers aren’t willing to settle for less than they deserve – and if you’re not providing excellent, AI-driven customer support, your competitors probably are.

68% of C-level support execs say it’s harder to retain customers now compared to a year ago.

43% of support teams believe this is due to higher expectations of great customer service.
Support teams have seen an increase in expectations in a number of areas. It’s probably no surprise that today’s AI-influenced customers expect faster responses, faster resolutions, and more availability, but they still want expert-level answers and a human (or human-ish) touch.

The top areas where support teams have seen the biggest increase in customer expectations:

- Speed of response: 63%
- Speed of resolution: 57%
- Knowledge and expertise: 49%
- Availability: 49%
- Politeness and empathy: 43%
How support teams are meeting increased expectations

- **53%** Helping customers in context when and where they need help most
- **52%** Providing fast, on-demand support
- **48%** Proactively answering customers’ questions, e.g. via targeted outbound messages

To meet these evolving needs and keep customers happy, support teams are helping customers in seamless, proactive ways, by meeting them in their channels of choice and preempting issues with targeted messages that prevent them from needing to contact support in the first place.

But for customer-obsessed teams that want to ace every one of those increased customer expectations, it’s time to adopt AI-assisted ways of working.
“In a recent poll of new customers, we found that 61% preferred to opt for the faster responses of AI vs waiting to speak with a customer support agent.”

Pierre-Camille Hamana
CEO and Founder of Hospitable
Map out the best pathway to meet customer expectations using the right combination of AI and human support

**Know what your customers want is only the first step – next you have to strategically plan how to deliver it.**

AI has transformed customer expectations, but the future of customer service is human and AI. By using both together, you can maximize your resources, free up support reps’ time for high-impact work, and leverage all of the skills and technologies at your disposal.

Here’s a handy guide to help you smash every category.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expectation</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speed of response</strong></td>
<td>Your AI chatbot provides instant, always-on responses, so customers don’t need to wait in a queue to resolve simple and repetitive questions – and it can start triaging the more complicated ones, too, so no customer is left hanging.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Speed of resolution</strong></td>
<td>Combining the power of your AI chatbot with the power of your human support team gives you greater capacity to work on – and solve – significantly more customer problems at once.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Knowledge and expertise</strong></td>
<td>Simple questions are resolved with the knowledge at your AI bot’s disposal (like your help center), while more complex issues are routed to your human support team for the kind of troubleshooting they excel at.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Availability</strong></td>
<td>24/7 AI chatbot availability takes care of the easy-to-resolve stuff, freeing up support reps to jump on high-impact queries ASAP.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Politeness and empathy</strong></td>
<td>AI chatbots are plenty polite. But for sensitive or emotionally charged queries – like billing problems – your human support team provides the irreplaceable human touch.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The AI race is on:
Almost half of customer support teams have already adopted AI, with more planning to invest in 2024.
Almost half of support teams are already using AI

Our research found that 45% of support teams are already using AI
The top benefits support teams see from using AI

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>24/7 support availability</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time savings</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fast and efficient resolution of customer issues</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost efficiency</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer feedback analysis</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increased quality and consistency across support</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The biggest and best benefits these teams are seeing include always-on support availability, team-wide time savings, and increased efficiency for their customers (as well as internal efficiency gains). They also report that AI enables them to perform customer feedback analysis and increase quality and consistency across their support, setting them up to solve problems tomorrow, not just today.

You might spot a pattern: all of those benefits are good for customers, support teams, and businesses, making AI a win-win-win.

Of the teams that have already adopted it, most report that **11-30% of their support volume is currently being resolved by AI**. That’s potentially a third of their support volume, instantly handled – winning back time for their support reps to work on trickier queries.
C-level support execs tested the waters with AI over the last year – and are diving in head first in 2024

AI investment is on the rise: 20% of C-level support execs invested significantly in AI during 2023, and this trajectory is set to trend upwards next year. Almost three-quarters (70%) of C-level support execs say they’re planning to invest in AI in 2024.
Across all cohorts, the top areas support teams are planning to invest in are chatbots and the behind-the-scenes infrastructure that strengthens them (like analysis and help center enhancement).

Meanwhile, forward-thinking C-level execs also have their eye on voice and speech recognition and real-time language translation capabilities, which will allow them to expand to more channels and markets.

To free up budget for this investment in AI, over a third of support execs and leaders plan to decrease focus on – and reduce budget for – non-AI technology or tools. Out with the old, in with the new.

### The top areas where support teams are planning to invest in 2024

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chatbots</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer behavior analysis</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge base enhancement</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The people who move fast will shape the customer service philosophies and strategies that get embedded in these tools that are being iterated on daily.”

Daniel Bunton
Head of Customer Support at Cleo AI
Support teams are more optimistic that AI could enhance the success of their team.

As AI becomes more prevalent, we’re seeing that sentiment around it is changing, too – and leaders and teams are getting excited.

More than half of support teams report that they’re more optimistic about AI compared to a year ago, suggesting they’ve seen the true potential of what AI can do for their customer service efforts.

Compared to a year ago, 56% of support teams are more optimistic that AI could enhance the success of their team.
There’s an “optimism gap” between execs and agents

While 61% of C-level support execs are more optimistic that AI could enhance the success of their team than a year ago, only 45% of support agents have a similar view.

But when we break this down by role, there’s still an “optimism gap” between execs and agents.

With so much focus on AI chatbots, it’s possible that agents don’t yet know the full extent of how much there is to be excited about, other than their new digital colleague. Don’t forget to communicate – and take full advantage of – the other myriad ways a fully AI-powered customer service solution will make every day easier, more efficient, and more enjoyable for your support reps.

Size matters

Of the four company sizes we surveyed, those with between 101–3,000 employees are more optimistic about AI, have adopted it at a higher rate, and are planning to invest in it more significantly than other cohorts next year.
3 ways to save time and enhance efficiency with AI and automation

1. Resolve and triage problems with AI chatbots.

Reduce your inbound volume with an AI bot that can instantly resolve a chunk of your customer queries using your existing support content. Leading AI chatbots have built-in safeguards to ensure that answers are accurate and on-brand, and can seamlessly pass more complex conversations to your human support team – after gathering some initial information to help them hit the ground running.

2. Save time on every response with AI-powered inbox features.

Modern customer service platforms enable you to view and manage all of your support channels (like email, live chat, phone, WhatsApp, and social) from one inbox, and are enriched with AI so you can:

- Quickly compose replies, expand on bullet points, rephrase your message, or adjust the tone.
- Instantly summarize entire customer conversations for detailed, contextualized handovers between agents.
- Understand team performance at a glance with real-time dashboards.

3. Build automated workflows to enhance personalization at scale.

With the right tools in your toolkit, you can create powerful, personalized customer journeys using visual automation builders. These builders enable you to combine bots, triggers, conditions, and rules to create efficient pathways and connect with your customers wherever they are. You can also enrich your conversations with customer data, like order history, to make your responses even more relevant.
Real talk: AI is coming for support jobs – but not in the way you think
Customer service has always been challenging.

It’s fast-paced, high-stakes, and – let’s be honest – occasionally kinda frustrating.

AI can alleviate many of the pressures that support teams face and free up their time to focus on more value-adding activities. And while it isn’t actually taking support reps’ jobs, it is set to shift what those jobs look like – for the better.

Like we say, the future of customer service is both humans and AI working together.

Our survey revealed that support teams are already reaping the rewards of a human-AI partnership. In addition to saving time on every answer with features like expanding, rephrasing, and adjusting the tone of responses, AI also helps teams analyze customer feedback to spot broader trends, enabling them to be more proactive and customer-centric.

The top areas where AI is saving support teams time

- Analyzing customer feedback: 35%
- Suggesting answers from knowledge base content: 34%
- Expanding notes or bullet points into full answers to customer questions: 28%
- Summarizing customer conversations: 25%
“AI makes support teams happier because it reduces the number of queries they have to handle, making their workload far more manageable. This means they can spend less time putting out fires and more time making customers’ lives better, which is far more rewarding.”

James Laurie
CX Operations Specialist at Up Learn
Customer expectations continue to rise, but support teams are now more confident they can meet them.

Our research shows that heading into 2024, the top challenge for C-level support execs is attracting and keeping high-quality reps, closely followed by increasing efficiency. The two are ranked almost equally, because you can’t have one without the other. Great people + great systems = happy employees empowered to do their best work.

### The top challenges for support teams according to C-level support execs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Challenge</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attracting and retaining quality staff</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increasing workflow/operational efficiency</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Managing conversation or call volume</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping the organization retain or grow the customer base</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unsurprisingly, the main customer service priority for C-level support executives in 2024 is also one of their biggest challenges: **increasing workflow efficiency**. Other priorities – like enabling customers to self-serve and automating support with chatbots – also contribute to this goal, improving efficiency for teams and customers alike.

Fine-tuning these areas will be crucial for providing the kind of fast, effective customer service that keeps customers coming back for more – which is another of C-level execs’ top priorities for the year ahead.

**The main customer service priorities for C-level support execs in 2024**

- **Increasing workflow efficiency**: 47%
- **Empowering customers to self-serve answers to their own questions**: 40%
- **Helping the organization retain or grow the customer base**: 34%
- **Automated support with chatbots**: 30%
Support leaders believe these new roles will be added to their team in the next five years.

We also found that AI is driving the creation of new types of support roles, many of which have strategic elements, like chatbot analyst and conversational UX mapper. With AI on hand to help with the logistics and practicalities – like resolving repetitive queries, drafting responses, creating new help content, and capturing more customer data to work with – there’s greater potential for reps to make a real impact on the customer experience and grow their careers in fulfilling new ways.
Support roles are evolving because of AI – but there’s a perception gap between execs and agents

Almost half (49%) of support teams believe that customer service roles on their team are evolving because of AI. But there’s a significant perception gap between leadership and agents here: the majority (69%) of C-level support execs believe that roles are evolving, compared to only 34% of support agents. In fact, 43% of support agents said that they think roles aren’t evolving.

This makes sense: after all, it’s part of a C-level’s job to look beyond today and see what’s possible tomorrow, while agents are typically more focused on day-to-day activities. But it does signal a need for forward-thinking leaders to communicate the opportunities and upcoming pathways to their teams so that reps feel included, excited, empowered – and can plan a long-term future with your company.

There’s a 35-point gap between the percentages of C-level execs and support agents who believe CS roles are evolving because of AI.
Is your support team viewed as a value driver or a cost center?

51% of support teams say their team is viewed as a value driver.

27% of support teams say their team is viewed as a cost center.

I don’t know

Know your worth

A worrying 37% of C-level support executives and 35% of support leaders say their company sees them as a cost center. This highlights the need to communicate the value customer service brings to the business as a whole with other C-level leaders and stakeholders. Linking your customer service efforts back to company goals and strategies can help, as can regularly sharing metrics updates – see Trend 5 for more.

This ties into another big question around the role – or rather, the perception – of customer service within the wider business. Over half of support teams say their company views them as a value driver, versus 27% who say their team is viewed as a cost center. But again, the breakdown reveals a discrepancy between leadership and agents, with the latter less likely to report being perceived as a value driver.

As AI transforms the customer service landscape and unlocks impactful new opportunities for your support reps, we anticipate this gap will close – and the true value customer service brings to the business will be fully recognized.
Future-proof and empower your support team by helping them grow into new roles

Want to set your team (or yourself) up for success? Here’s a breakdown of some of the upcoming support roles we anticipate, as well as the skills and activities support reps can practice now to thrive later.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Role</th>
<th>What they do</th>
<th>Key responsibilities</th>
<th>How to start</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Chatbot analyst    | Analyze chatbot performance and customer conversation data to uncover insights and find new opportunities. | • Analyzing and interpreting chatbot data.  
• Understanding how and why AI chatbots work the way they do.  
• Reporting on chatbot performance.  
• Collaborating across teams to identify opportunities and priorities. | • Dig in to your AI bot reports to discuss insights and suggest action points.  
• Dedicate time each week to investigate data and identify patterns.  
• Learn about the core technologies behind AI chatbots, natural language processing (NLP) and large language models (LLMs).  
• Practice reporting on these insights and look for opportunities to share your findings with other teams. |
| Conversation designer | Optimize the end-to-end support experience for your customers using a combination of AI bots, automation, and human support. | • Mapping the user experience.  
• Collecting and interpreting customer feedback.  
• Creating and optimizing workflows. | • Study customer journey mapping and the UX principles needed to do it effectively.  
• Regularly review customer feedback to spot patterns and find areas to improve.  
• Run workshops with your support team to understand pain points or weaknesses in their current workflow.  
• Suggest and trial new workflows and conversation paths and report on their success. |
| Knowledge manager  | Create high-quality support content to fuel your AI bots, as well as internal content for your customer service team to use, and review and optimize how that content gets used. | • Identifying gaps in your knowledge base.  
• Creating and updating help center articles and other content.  
• Managing and optimizing your help center.  
• Analyzing bot metrics to understand content performance. | • Track the questions your bot wasn’t able to answer to identify gaps in your existing knowledge base.  
• Regularly update your help center content as you launch new features.  
• Carve out time to write or update new content each week.  
• Dig into content and bot analytics to see which resources are most helpful to customers, then apply these learnings to new content. |
Ditch the dated tech:
Old tools are holding support teams back, and they’re reevaluating their tech stacks for 2024
Despite monumental shifts in customer service technology thanks to AI, our research suggests that many support teams are still weighed down by a mish-mash of old tools.

Support teams report using a combination of tools of the trade, but there’s a disconnect between what they’re using and what they say works best for them – and their customers.

Each of these “traditional” tools has strengths and weaknesses:

- Email allows for asynchronous conversations, but it’s slow and time-consuming to craft responses.
- Customer relationship management (CRM) systems capture customer data, but can be costly and complex to implement.
- Phone support allows for instantaneous back-and-forth communication, but its effectiveness is limited by its lack of scalability.

...and the most effective channels, according to support leaders
As a result, less than a fifth of respondents (18%) say that the tools they use can fully support their needs all of the time. Maybe that’s why 76% of C-level support execs are always looking for new platforms, tools, and technologies – and 65% are looking at new platforms specifically as a result of AI.

18% of support teams said that the tools they use can fully support their needs all of the time

76% of C-level support execs said they’re always looking for new platforms, tools, and technologies

65% of support execs and leaders are specifically looking at new platforms or tools as a result of AI.
A modern, AI-powered customer service platform combines the best of all worlds by:

- **Being channel agnostic**, so you can meet customers in their preferred channel (all from one centralized place behind the scenes).

- **Enabling seamless integration of customer data**, so you can provide personalized experiences that build loyalty.

- **Enhancing workflows with leading edge automation**, to streamline processes and boost efficiency.

- **Leveraging your knowledge base** and providing content management capabilities that help you get the most from your resources.
“We had previously been using Zendesk for inbound tickets, Appcues for outbound in-app customer engagement, and Iterable for customer life-cycle outbound communication (email & push). Intercom allowed us to consolidate our tech stack and bring all of these communication channels into one system. This has saved our team a ton of time and has provided better visibility to both inbound tickets and automated outbound engagements.”

John Wisnieski
Customer Success Operations Manager at ArcSite
C-level support execs’ reasons for looking for new platforms, tools, or technologies

- **Cost**: 35%
- **Data security concerns**: 32%
- **Platform downtime**: 29%
- **Lack of real-time insights**: 28%
- **Integration complexity**: 28%

In addition to the AI revolution, there are a number of other factors that cause support leadership to look for new tools. C-level execs are focused on big-picture concerns – like cost, data security, and stability – while 29% of support leaders are especially frustrated by limited customization.

**Micro-trend**

**The importance of customization**

To provide a consistent, reliable customer experience that builds trust and loyalty, your customer service channels should be an extension of the rest of your brand. Look for platforms that enable you to customize the look and feel of your AI chatbot and live chat messenger – think: colors, logo, and tone of voice – to reassure your customers that they’re in safe hands.
But despite all these push factors for support leaders to adopt new tools, there are challenges when implementing new technologies, too. Each role has unique obstacles: C-level execs reported resistance to change as their biggest struggle, while support leaders – the people tasked with rolling out the implementation and ensuring a smooth transition – cited cost, resistance to change, and the issue of data migration complexity.

For support agents, disruption of workflows (30%) and insufficient training and onboarding (23%) were mentioned as major challenges. These issues don’t just affect your team; they affect your customers as well – so it’s doubly important to provide adequate training and support for any new tool to ensure things go as smoothly as possible.

The biggest obstacles when implementing new technologies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>C-level support execs</th>
<th>Support leaders</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
<td>Cost and budget constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39%</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost and budget constraints</td>
<td>Resistance to change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Insufficient training and onboarding</td>
<td>Data migration complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30%</td>
<td>24%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disruption of workflows</td>
<td>Disruption of workflows</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Get buy-in for new tools by addressing the common obstacles

1. **Overcome resistance to change**
   - Share the reasons for the change with the wider team, so people understand the logic behind it.
   - Highlight how the new tool will address the team’s existing pain points and improve their everyday work (be specific!).
   - Take questions and address feedback to keep an open line of communication with your team and alleviate any anxieties. You could do this in a company or team meeting, or create a dedicated Slack channel for ongoing updates.

2. **Make implementation easier**
   - Do a full evaluation of the new tool to make sure it meets your needs. Consider factors like integrations with your existing tech stack, ease of data migration, and security certifications.
   - Make a detailed plan for the transition. Consider which workflows need to be transferred to your new tool, which ones should be updated, and identify what resources you’ll need to make the switch.
   - Get excited about the untapped opportunities an innovative new tool brings. Where can you optimize existing workflows with AI and incorporate bots to create better customer experiences?

3. **Minimize disruption**
   - Consider the timing for the change. For example, don’t plan to switch to a new customer service platform during the holiday season or just as you launch a new product or feature. Look at your historical data to identify trends – are there any quiet periods you can take advantage of?
   - Provide in-depth training on how to use your new tool to prepare support reps for the change. In addition to dedicated training sessions, look for a platform with lots of help resources to support your team even further.
   - Keep track of commonly asked questions and create internal documentation to help guide reps through these FAQs.
Metrics reloaded:
Success looks different in an AI-first world, and teams need to redefine the way they measure value
As customer service increasingly shifts towards AI-first ways of working, leaders will need to find new ways to measure their success and ensure they’re equipped for the future.

Our survey revealed that support teams rely on a few key ways of measuring the customer experience, such as customer satisfaction (CSAT) score, online feedback, and customer follow-ups.

Being able to measure and report on your customers’ experience is crucial. It helps you stay close to them, understand their needs, and drive continuous improvement across your support organization. Not only that, but it also helps support leaders and teams connect their work to tangible outcomes and business results, highlighting how customer service really is a value driver, not a cost center, for your business.
The percentage of respondents who said customer service metrics are changing as a result of recent developments in AI

However, a quarter of support teams cannot say their current tools enable them to track the metrics that they need to. And with 75% of support teams (and even more of our executive cohort) saying that traditional customer service metrics are changing as a result of recent developments in AI, it begs the question: can old-school, disconnected tech stacks measure value in a new world?
The metrics most likely to change as a result of AI, according to support teams

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>Impact (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CSAT</td>
<td>38%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to resolution</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average handle time</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First response time</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The number one metric teams believe will change is CSAT. As an overall indicator of customer happiness, CSAT is often the Holy Grail metric for support teams. Now, with AI supporting every part of the customer service interaction, there are more opportunities than ever for your team to delight your customers and provide the exact level of support they need.

Consequently, those ever-rising customer expectations will only get higher. But be warned: poorly executed AI experiences (like hallucinations) also risk tanking your CSAT score, so it’s important to monitor this metric carefully and make adjustments as needed.

AI is also set to revolutionize time-based metrics, accelerating everything from time to resolution (TTR) to average handle time (AHT) to first response time (FRT) with its instant answers and behind-the-scenes efficiency gains.

This is where the need to evolve your metrics to meet AI-first ways of working comes in. Without a nuanced understanding of your team’s (and bot’s) performance, you risk skewing your data and overlooking major insights – and opportunities.

But with the right metrics framework (and the right platform to help you find and leverage them), you can:

- Pinpoint exactly which parts of the customer service experience need to change or can be improved, even in real time.
- Identify where in the user journey bots are most efficient versus where humans work best.
- Iterate and optimize your customer service based on actionable insights surfaced by AI.
“The richness of information and insights that Intercom is able to provide, and the ease with which we are able to get to those insights, is Intercom’s secret sauce.”

Gregor Hartnell
Head of Customer Experience at RateMyAgent
No customer service metric is an island. Instead, think of them like an archipelago: a connected cluster of data points that all work together within the same ecosystem.

Let’s go island hopping.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Metric</th>
<th>What it tells you</th>
<th>What to consider now</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Customer satisfaction (CSAT)</td>
<td>How happy your customers are with their customer service experience</td>
<td>✷ How does CSAT compare between bots and humans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✷ Are customers less inclined to rate their interactions with bots?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time to resolution (TTR)</td>
<td>The average time it takes to fully resolve a customer query</td>
<td>✷ How does TTR and AHT vary between bots and humans?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✷ Which types of conversations take longer to handle/resolve and why?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average handle time (AHT)</td>
<td>The average time your team spends working on customer conversations.</td>
<td>✷ What resources or workflow optimizations could you deploy to speed up these processes?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First response time (FRT)</td>
<td>The time it takes to send an initial response to a customer query</td>
<td>✷ How does FRT affect other metrics, like CSAT?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rate of automated resolution (ROAR)</td>
<td>The number of queries that are entirely resolved by automation and bots</td>
<td>✷ How successful are your bots at triaging queries?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Customer effort score (CES)</td>
<td>How much effort a customer has to make in order to resolve their issue</td>
<td>✷ What percentage of your support volume is being completely resolved with no human intervention – and how much time is that freeing up for your support team?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✷ How can you reinvest these time savings into activities that further improve the customer experience or upskill support reps?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>✷ Are your AI bots reducing customer effort (they should be!) or are there any issues causing frustration?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How fundamental customer service metrics are changing – and what to do about it

1. **Get granular**
   Split out key reports (like CSAT, TTR, and AHT) into “bots” and “humans” so you can drill down and get an accurate read on overall performance.

2. **Consider in context**
   Remember that with AI resolving simpler issues, your team will be left with the more complicated ones – so their handling and resolution times will likely increase. Consider these metrics alongside CSAT scores for a more holistic view.

3. **Iterate and optimize**
   Regularly analyze your metrics to find new ways to improve. For example: which area has the lowest customer satisfaction ratings and why? Are there any common patterns? What can you do differently? Maybe you can create a new piece of help content for your AI bot to share, or use automation to route tricky issues to the right members of your team for expert input, faster.

4. **Share your wins**
   Don’t forget to report on the overall return on investment of your AI efforts (like time saved, increase in conversations managed, and overall boost in customer happiness) to the wider business to highlight your team’s increased strategic impact.
Customer service is undergoing radical change. Are you ready to embrace it?

AI-powered customer service has already changed the support game for good (double meaning intended). The support teams embracing this technology are enjoying the benefits of happier customers, more productive teams, and better KPIs.

At Intercom, we’re all-in on service AI – and we’re leading this transformation. We’re ahead of the competition, and we’re here to help you get ahead of yours, too.

Our complete customer service platform is the only solution that combines an AI chatbot, help desk, and proactive support tools to help you maximize productivity and deliver personalized support at scale.

Want to see for yourself? Try Intercom today to unlock the power of AI for customer service.

Start a free trial